

In the Claims:

Please amend claims 1 and 7-15 as follows:

1. (Currently Amended) A content usage control system which controls the usage of content supplied by an authorized information supplier including a content producer who is also an information producer and those persons authorized by the information producer, said system comprising:

a user unit which enables a user to use the content, said user unit including a plurality of physical elements;

a setting unit which sets a license as a structure expressed by a combination of logic sums and logic products of a plurality of partial licenses for the content based on ID information of the physical elements of said user unit including media used in said user unit and ID information of the user; and

a usage control unit which controls the usage of the content by said user unit by using license information encrypted, at the request of the user unit intending to use the content, from the license set by said setting unit and a content decode key by the ID information of the physical elements through which the license information is passed in sequence until the content is decoded by use of the content decode key;

wherein the license information is partially decoded by one of said physical elements, and then said partially decoded license information is sent to another of said physical elements to be decoded.

2. (Previously Amended) The content usage control system according to claim 1, wherein the partial licenses set by said setting unit include an accounting condition constituting the condition for a category changing with a usage state of said user unit and the user.

3. (Previously Amended) The content usage control system according to claim 1,

in which said user unit decodes the license information sent in accordance with the content usage request, based on the ID information of the physical elements of the user unit when the license information is passed to each of the physical elements in sequence, and in the case where the license conditions are satisfied, the encrypted content is decoded by use of the content decode key.

4. (Previously Amended) The content usage control system according to claim 1, wherein said usage control unit encrypts by multiplexing the ID information of the physical elements corresponding to the partial licenses of the license in the case where an interface of the partial licenses is described by the logic product.

5. (Original) The content usage control system according to claim 1, wherein the physical elements include those included in other physical elements.

6. (Previously Amended) The content usage control system according to claim 1, further comprising a content server which holds the content encrypted by the authorized information supplier on an open network, and sends the encrypted content to said user unit upon receipt of a request to distribute the content from said user unit.

7. (Currently Amended) A content usage control system which controls the usage of content supplied by an authorized information supplier including a content producer who is also an information producer and persons authorized by the information producer, said system comprising:

a user unit which requests usage of the content, and decodes the encrypted content using a content decode key in the case of satisfying license conditions obtained by decoding license information sent in accordance with a content usage request, based on ID information of the physical elements of the user unit when the license information is passed to each of the physical elements in sequence, said user unit including a plurality of physical elements;

a setting unit which sets a license expressed as a structure by a combination of logic sums and logic products of a plurality of partial licenses for the content based on the ID information of the physical elements of said user unit including media used in said user unit and ID information for the user;

a conditions storage unit which stores the license conditions set by said setting unit;

a holding unit which holds said content decode key;

an extraction unit which receives the content usage request from said user unit and extracts the license conditions and said content decode key corresponding to said user unit; and

a production unit which produces the license information by encrypting the license conditions and said content decode key based on the ID information of the physical elements through which the license information is passed in sequence until the content is decoded by use of the content decode key and sends the license information to said user unit;

wherein the license information is partially decoded by one of said physical elements, and then said partially decoded license information is sent to another of said physical elements to be decoded.

8. (Currently Amended) A content usage apparatus connected to a network for enabling a user to use the content, said apparatus comprising:

a request unit which transmits ID information of physical elements of said content usage apparatus and ID information of the user to an external content management apparatus which manages the content in response to a content usage request;

a unit which decodes license information transmitted by said content management apparatus in response to the content usage request, using the ID information of the physical elements of said content usage apparatus when the license information is passed to each of the physical elements in sequence, and determines license conditions and a content decode key; and

a unit which decodes the content using the content decode key when permitted upon determination that the license has been obtained;

wherein the license information is partially decoded by one of said physical elements, and then said partially decoded license information is sent to another of said physical elements to be decoded.

9. (Currently Amended) A computer readable recording medium which stores a program executed by a computer of a content usage apparatus connected to a network for enabling a user to use the content, said program being intended to perform operations comprising the steps of:

transmitting ID information of physical elements of said content usage apparatus and ID information of a user to an external content management apparatus which manages the content in accordance with a content usage request;

determining license conditions and a content decode key by decoding license information transmitted by said external content management apparatus in response to

the content usage request, using the ID information of the physical elements of said content usage apparatus when the license information is passed to each of the physical elements in sequence; and

decoding the content using the content decode key when permitted upon determination of the license conditions;

wherein the license information is partially decoded by one of said physical elements, and then said partially decoded license information is sent to another of said physical elements to be decoded.

10. (Currently Amended) A content usage apparatus enabling a user to use the content, said apparatus comprising:

a unit which determines, in response to a content usage request, license conditions and a content decode key by decoding license information for the content based on ID information of physical elements of said content usage apparatus when the license information is passed to each of the physical elements in sequence; and

a unit which decodes the content by use of the content decode key when permitted upon satisfaction of the license conditions determined;

wherein the license information is partially decoded by one of said physical elements, and then said partially decoded license information is sent to another of said physical elements to be decoded.

11. (Currently Amended) A computer readable recording medium which stores a program executed by a computer of a content usage apparatus for enabling a user to use the content, said program being intended to perform operations comprising the steps of:

determining, in response to a content usage request, license conditions and a content decode key by decoding license information of the content based on ID information of physical elements of said content usage apparatus when the license information is passed to each of the physical elements in sequence; and

decoding the content using the content decode key when permitted upon determination of the license conditions;

wherein the license information is partially decoded by one of said physical elements, and then said partially decoded license information is sent to another of said physical elements to be decoded.

12. (Currently Amended) A program executed by a computer of a content usage apparatus connected to a network for enabling a user to use the content, said program being intended to perform operations comprising the steps of:

transmitting ID information of physical elements of said content usage apparatus and ID information of the user to an external content management apparatus which manages the content in accordance with a content usage request;

determining license conditions and a content decode key by decoding license information transmitted by said external content management apparatus in response to the content usage request, using the ID information of the physical elements of said content usage apparatus when the license information is passed to each of the physical elements in sequence; and

decoding the content using the content decode key when permitted upon determination of the license conditions;

wherein the license information is partially decoded by one of said physical elements, and then said partially decoded license information is sent to another of said physical elements to be decoded.

13. (Currently Amended) A content usage method employed on a content usage apparatus connected to a network for enabling a user to use the content, said method comprising:

transmitting ID information of physical elements of said content usage apparatus and ID information of the user to an external content management apparatus which manages the content in accordance with a content usage request;

determining license conditions and a content decode key by decoding license information transmitted by said external content management apparatus in response to the content usage request, using the ID information of the physical elements of said content

usage apparatus when the license information is passed to each of the physical elements in sequence; and

decoding the content using the content decode key when permitted upon determination of the license conditions;

wherein the license information is partially decoded by one of said physical elements, and then said partially decoded license information is sent to another of said physical elements to be decoded.

14. (Currently Amended) A program executed by a computer of a content usage apparatus for enabling a user to use the content, said program being intended to perform operations comprising the steps of:

determining, in response to a content usage request, license conditions and a content decode key by decoding license information of the content based on ID information of physical elements of said content usage apparatus when the license information is passed to each of the physical elements in sequence; and

decoding the content using the content decode key when permitted upon determination of the license conditions;

wherein the license information is partially decoded by one of said physical elements, and then said partially decoded license information is sent to another of said physical elements to be decoded.

15. (Currently Amended) A content usage method employed on a content usage apparatus for enabling a user to use the content, said method comprising:

determining, in response to a content usage request, license conditions and a content decode key by decoding license information of the content based on ID information of physical elements of said content usage apparatus when the license information is passed to each of the physical elements in sequence; and

decoding the content using the content decode key when permitted upon determination of the license conditions;

wherein the license information is partially decoded by one of said physical elements, and then said partially decoded license information is sent to another of said physical elements to be decoded.